5. Standards for container terminals

International intermodal traffic requires efficient container terminals. The international container terminals along the lines of the Trans-Asian Railway network must:

be located as close as possible to the main trunk line so that no time is lost entering an exiting the terminal;

be set aside from other yards so that their operations are not hampered by other shunting movements;

offer easy access to road vehicles so as to guarantee reliability of the road-rail interface;

have track of sufficient length at loading/unloading area to reduce the need for shunting;

be equipped with equipment comprising of gantry cranes, straddle-carriers, top lifters and/or reach-stackers able to handle ISO containers of at least 20-foot dimension in length;

make provisions for possible expansion;

offer Customs facilities for the clearance of goods.

Talks with different countries

4629 SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state

(a) the number of foreign dignitaries who visited India and the number of , India dignitaries who visited foreign countries during the last one year;

the details of talks with different countries and the outcome thereof; and

whether any other agreement apart from US-lndo atomic deal have been signed during these visits'?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA): (a) 25 Heads of State/Government, 8 Vice Presidents/Deputy President/ Crown Prince, 10 Deputy Prime Ministers and 44 Foreign Ministers and other dignitaries visited India

during last one year. Number of visits abroad of Indian dignitaries *i.e.* President, Vice President, PM and External Affairs Minister during this period was: President (2), Vice-President (1), PM (81 and External Affairs Minister (9).

(b) and (c) Details of issues discussed with visiting foreign dignitaries and bilateral agreements signed are provided in Statement-I *(see* below). Details in respect of Indian dignitaries visiting abroad are given in Statement-I I.

Statement-I

Details of issues discussed with visiting foreign dignitaries and bilateral agreements signed

1. Afghanistan

HE. President Karzai visited India from November 15—19, 2006 to inaugurate the 2nd Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan. The two sides had useful discussions on various aspects of bilateral relations, including progress achieved in the various bilateral assistance projects. Issues relating to regional security and cooperation, increased violence and terrorism in Afghanistan and the ways to reduce and combat terrorism also came up for discussion.

2. African Union

Prof. Alpha Oumar Konare, Chairperson of the Commission of the Africa Union paid an official visit to India from 19—21 December, 2006. During the visit, he called on the President and EAM. During his meeting with EAM & MOS (AS), Prof. Konare conveyed the desire of the AU to expand Africa's relations with India and proposed an AU lndia Summit. The need for a high level political dialogue with a Group of 12 African heads of State/ Government was discussed and to realize this objective it was felt that a Working Group be set up to draw up an Agenda and ensure follow up action. EAM conveyed India's desire to cooperate further with the AU and assist it in realizing its vision of Africa unitedly building Africa. The two sides also discussed historical and cultural ties between India and Africa, the importance of democratic values, and implementation of the Pan Africa e-network.

3 Argentina

HE Mr Jorge Enrique Taiana, Minister of External Relations, International Commerce and Worship of Argentina visited India from July 3-7, 2006. His talks with MOS for External Affairs covered strengthening of bilateral cooperation.

4 Armenia

A Parliamentary delegation from Armenia, led by HE Mr. Tigran Torosyan, President of the Armenian National Assembly, visited India from December 13-17, 2006 The delegation held meetings with the Vice President, Speaker (Lok Sabha), the External Affairs Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs to discuss bilateral relations and parliamentary exchanges between the two countries.

5 Austria

HE Dr. Ursula Plassnik. Federal Minister for EU and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria, paid an Official Visit to India from March 15-18, 2007 The Austrian Minister called on PM and met with Minister of Science and Technology and Earth Sciences and Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment

6. Bahrain

The Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Bahrain Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa visited India from 19-22 March, 2007. The leaders of India and Bahrain in their discussion recalled the historical ties between the two countries and stressed the need for diversifying and consolidating this relationship and in that context warmly welcomed the opening of the Embassy of Bahrain in New Delhi on 21 March, 2007. Agreements signed during the visit of the Crown Prince included the (i) Executive Programme for Cultural Cooperation (2007-2010) and (ii) Memorandum of Cooperation between Prasar Bharati and Bahrain Radio and TV Corporation

7 Bangladesh

The Chief Advisor of the caretaker Government of Bangladesh, HE. Mr. Fakhruddin Ahmed as well as the Foreign Affairs Advisor Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury visited India to participate in the SAARC Summit in April, 2007 On the sidelines of the Summit, they met PM and EAM respectively. Both

sides agreed that the institutionalised bilateral mechanisms would be revived at an early date to ensure movement of bilateral relations in a positive direction.

8 Belarus

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Mr. Sergei Martynov visited India on February 22-23, 2007. He met External Affairs Minister, Minister of Commerce and Industry and MOS for External Affairs to discuss further strengthening of India-Belarus relations.and forthcoming visit of the President of Belarus to India.

President of Belarus, H.E. Mr. Aleksandr Lukashenko paid a state visit to India from 15-16 April, 2007. He met our President, Vice President, Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister and discussed bilateral relations and exchanged views on issues of international and mutual interest. Five agreements in the areas of culture, S&T, extradition, agriculture and Belarus' WTO accession were signed and a Joint Statement was adopted during the visit.

9 Belgium

HE. Mr. Guy Verhofstadt, Prime Minister of Belgium visited India from November 2-7,2006. Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed. Following agreements were signed during the visit:

(i) Agreement on Social Security,

(ii) Agreement on Cooperation in S&T.

10 Benin

Foreign Minister Madame Aladji Boni Diallo Manam visited India from 26-27 June, 2006. Issues of bilateral, regional and international interest were discussed.

11. Bhutan

(a) The Fourth King of Bhutan, His Majesty, Jigme Singye Wangchuck accompanied by the Crown Prince Trongsa Penlop Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and Minister for Trade and Industry, Lyonpo Yeshey Zimba visited India from 26-31 July, 2006. During the visit, he called on President and met Prime Minister. The visit provided an opportunity to discuss issues of mutual interest. Agreement concerning cooperation in the field of hydro

electricity power and a Protocol to the Inter-Governmental Agreement on the Tala Hydroelectric Project laying down commercial arrangements for purchase of power from the project were signed. The Agreement on Trade, Commerce and Transit was renewed.

(b) Foreign Minister of Bhutan. HE. Mr. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk visited India from 08-10 August, 2006 and led the Bhutanese delegation for the BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting in New Delhi on 9th August. 2006.

Crown Prince of Bhutan visited India from November 26-30, 2006 on a private visit.

Prime Minister of Bhutan HE. Mr. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuck, and Foreign Minister of Bhutan visited India from January 28-February 1, 2007 to participate in the 'Conference on Peace, Non-Violence and Empowerment' (Satyagraha Conference) held in Delhi from Janut *j* 29-30, 2007.

His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the King of Bhutan, paid an official visit to India from February 7-12, 2007 His Excellency Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuck. Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and senior officials of the Royal Government of Bhutan accompanied His Majesty the King. During the visit, both sides exchanged views on bilateral, regional and international issues. The Government of India reaffirmed its full support to Bhutan during its period of transition to a democratic constitutional monarchy, including for the forthcoming elections. India reiterated its commitment to provide all possible assistance within its resources to the Royal Government of Bhutan in its socio-economic development programme, including the on-going Ninth Five Year Plan and the forthcoming Tenth Five Year Plan. The updated India-Bhutan Friendship. Treaty was signed on February 08. 2007 in New Delhi

Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Bhutan, HE. Mr. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk visited India from 1-5 April, 2007 for the 14th SAARC SUMMIT in New Delhi

12 Botswana

President of the Republic of Botswana, HE. Mr. Festus G. Mogae, paid a State visit to India from December 7-13, 2006. The two countries discussed cooperation in health and education sectors, setting up of a science and technology institute in Botswana, mining including exploration for diamonds in Botswana, rural development and international and regional issues PM offered Botswana a line of credit of US$20m and grant assistance of S 11m. Botswana President committed support to India on

India—SACU PTA, India—SADC Forum and Permanent Membership in the UN Security Council. The following Agreements/MOUs were signed during the visit:

(i) Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement.

(ii) General Agreement on Bilateral Cooperation.

(iii) Cultural Exchange Programme for the period 2007-2010.

(iV) Country Agreement with the Government of Botswana for Pan-African e-Network.

13 Brazil

Mr. CelsoAmorim, Minister of External Relations of Brazil, visited India from April 11-13, 2007. The visiting Minister had meetings with PM, EAM and MOS co-chaired the India-Brazil Joint Commission with EAM.

14. Brunei Darussalam

Pehin Dato Lim Jock Seng, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade-ll of Brunei Darussalam visited India from October 10-13, 2006. During his visit, the Brunei Minister had meetings with Defence Minister, MOS for Communication and Information Technology and MOS for External Affairs (EA). Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

15 Burundi

The 2nd Vice President of the Republic of Burundi, Madame Marine Barampama paid an official visit to India from October, 6-11, 2006. She attended the COMESA—India Ministerial level Talks held in New Delhi and participated in the India-Africa Partnership Conclave organized by CM at New Delhi from October 9 to 11,2006. She also had meeting with MOS for Agriculture, Shri Kantilal Bhuria and discussed bilateral cooperation in the agriculture area.

16 China

(a) The President of the People's Republic of China, H.E. Mr. Hu Jintao visited India from November 20-23, 2006. During the visit, the two sides reviewed the bilateral relations, including the boundary question, and discussed regional and international issues of mutual interest. The two sides agreed to a 10-pronged strategy to upgrade India-China relations to a qualitatively new level and to substantiate further their strategic and

cooperative partnership. Following Agreements/Documents were signed during the visit:

(i) Protocol on the Establishment of Consulates-General at Guangzhou and Kolkata

(ii) Protocol on Cooperation between the Ministry of External Affairs of India and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China

(iii) Agreement on the Issue of Property of the Consulate-General of India in Shanghai

(iv) Agreement on Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion

(v) Memorandum of Understanding on Inspection of Export Cargo (Iron Ore)

(vi) Protocol on Phytosanitary Requirements for Exporting Rice from India to China

(vii) Memorandum of Understanding between Forward Markets Commission of India and China Securities Regulatory Commission regarding Commodity Futures Regulatory Cooperation

(viii) Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the Indian Institute of Public Administration and the Central Party School of the Communist Party of China

(ix) Agreement on Forestry Cooperation

(x) Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences

(xi) Exchange Programme on Cooperation in the Field or Education

(xii) Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage

(xiii) Agreement on Preventing Theft, Cladestine Excavation and Illicit Import and Export of Cultural Property

(b) Mr Li Zahoxing, Foreign Minister of China visited India from February 13-14, 2007. The visit of the Chinese Foreign Minister provided an .opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the understandings reached during the visit of the Chinese President of India. He also/ettended the Trilateral Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of India. China and Russia.

(c) Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing also attended the 14th SAARC Summit held in New Delhi from 3 to 4 April, 2007, wherein China was admitted as an "Observer".

17 COMESA

A delegation from .the Common Market for the Eastern & Southern Africa (COMESA) led by Hon. Mitali Kabanda Protais, Minister of Trade and Industry of Rwanda and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of COMESA, visited New Delhi from October 4-11,2006 for the India-COMESA Ministerial Meeting. Among others, the delegation als'o included Hon. Madan Dulloo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Cooperation of Mauritius. The Vice President of Burundi, Mrs. Marina Barampama who was in New Delhi on a bilateral visit, also joined the COMESA Meet.

The delegation paid a courtesy call on Rashtrapatiji who outlined his vision for increased India-Africa trade and investment cooperation. Delegation level talks were held with MOS for External Affairs, Shri Anand Sharma on October 6, 2006. At the end of official talks, a joint communique was signed, wherein it was agreed to intensify efforts for the development of infrastructure in COMESA countries; advance Institutional Capacity Building; explore the possibility of Government of India's participation in the PTA Bank and the African Trade Insurance Agency; cooperate in production of agro-inputs etc.

18 Comoros

Mr. Ahmed Ben Said Jaffar, Minister of External Relations and Cooperation of Comoros visited India from July 25-28, 2006. Discussions focused on enhancement of bilateral relations between the two countries in all spheres including developmental assistance, naval cooperation and tourism links.

19. Congo

Mr. Rodophe Adada, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Congo visited India from October 24-29,2006. In his meeting with EAM, issues pertaining to bilateral cooperation and mutual interest, and international affairs were discussed. EAM offered to extend cooperation to the Republic of Congo in capacity building, specialised training and consider providing assistance in Agriculture, Railways and Technical Areas.

20 Cuba

Mr Felipe Perez Roque, Minister of External Relations of Cuba visited India from April 11-12, 2007. The visiting Minister discussed strengthening of bilateral relations and NAM issues.

21 Ecuador

Dr. Francisco Carrion, Foreign Minister of Ecuador visited India from July 17-20, 2006. Bilateral talks were held with MOS for External Affairs, and five Agreements/MOUs were signed namely: MOU between OVL and Ecuadorian State Oil Company, Agreement on Cultural Cooperation, MOU on Cooperation between Diplomatic Academies, Education Exchange Programme and Arrangement for Gainful Employment of Spouses of officials of Diplomatic Missions/Posts

22 Egypt

The Egyptian Foreign Minister Mr. Aboul Gheit visited India from December 15-16, 2006 to co-Chair the 5th Session of India-Egypt Joint Commission meeting in New Delhi. He had detailed talks with EAM on various bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. The 5th Session of the India-Egypt Joint Commission, co-chaired by EAM and the Egyptian Foreign Minister, was held on December 16. The Joint Commission discussions focused on strengthening cooperation in economic, commercial, science and technology, agriculture, IT, and cultural fields. Following Agreements/Documents were signed during the visit:

(i) The Partnership Agreement; the Executive Programme of Cultural, Educational and Scientific Cooperation for the years 2007-2009.

(ii) The Executive Programme of Science and Technological Cooperation for the years 2007-2009.

(iii) The Work Plan under the Agreement on Cooperation in Agriculture for the years 2007-2008.

(iv) Memorandum of Understanding on Bilateral Air Services.

23. El Salvador

Mr. Francisco E. Lainez, Minister of External Relations of the Republic of El Salvador visited India from March 4-9,2007. Strengthening of bilateral relations and cooperation was discussed during his visit.

24. Ethiopia

Mr. Addisu Legesse, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development of Ethiopia visited India from May 15-20, 2006. He discussed possibilities of cooperation with India in the field of agriculture and sugar in particular.

25. European Union

Dr. (Ms) Benita Ferrero Waldner, EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy visited India from February 16-20,2007. India-EU, regional and global issues were discussed.

President of European Parliament Mr. Josep BORELL visited India from 30 Sep.-06 Oct., 2006. Various bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed during his visit. -

External Relations Commissioner Ms. Benita Ferrero WALDNER visited India from 16-20 Feb., 2007. India-EU, bilateral, regional and global issues were disucssed.

26 Fiji

A 12-member Investment and Trade Delegation from Fiji led by Mr. Kaliopate Tavola, Minister for External Affairs and Trade visited India from 20-29 November, 2006. During stay in Delhi from November 20-22, 2006, the Fijian Minister called on EAM, Commerce and Industry Minister, Tourism and Culture Minister and MOS for External Affairs (EA). Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed,

Mr. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Interim Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Fiji paid an official visit to India from March 3-6, 2007. During the visit, he had meetings with Minister of External Affairs and Minister of Tourism and Culture. Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

27. Finland

H.E. Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of Finland visited Delhi from January 20-24, 2007 in connection with the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit from January 22-24, 2007 organized by TERI. She was accompanied by Minister of Trade and Industry Mauri Pekkarinen and a business delegation. The Finnish President met with Rashtrapatiji, PM,

and Chairperson, UPA. Bilateral relations including political and economic issues were discussed.

28. France

Mr. Philippe Douste-Blazy, Foreign Minister of France visited India from November 30-December 1,2006. Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed.

29. Ghana

Foreign Minister Mr. Nana Akufo-addo paid an official visit to India from 9-11 June, 2006.

30 Hungary

The Hungarian Foreign Minister Dr. Kinga Goncz visited India from November 2-6, 2006. Bilateral relations including political and economic issues were discussed.

31. Iceland'

HE. Dr. Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, President of Iceland, visited India from January 20-25, 2007 in connection with the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit from January 22-24, 2007 organized by TERI. He had meetings with President; PM, Chairperson, UPA, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shri Murli Deora, Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports and Panchayati Raj, Shri Mani Shanker Iyer, and Minister of Civil Aviation, Shri Praful Patel. Bilateral relations including political and economic issues were discussed.

32. Indonesia

Mr. Jusuf Kalla, Vice President of Indonesia, visited India from January 28-31, 2007 for participation in the Satyagraha Conference. During his visit, the Indonesian Vice President called on the Prime Minister and Vice President. Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

33 Iran

Mr Manouchehr Mottaki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran visited India on 16-17 November, 2006. Bilateral and regional issues were discussed. On the IPI Gas Pipeline project, India reaffirmed its commitment while noting that regular official level talks were taking

place to resolve all outstanding issues. The importance of Iran to India as a transit point for access to Afghanistan and Central Asia was mentioned. India stated that IAEA should play the central role in resolving issues related to Iran's nuclear programme. The situation in Afghanistan and Iraq was also discussed.

34. Italy

(a) H.E. Dr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of Italy, accompanied by Minister for International Trade and European Affairs, Minister for Infrastructure and Minister for Family Policies visited India from February 10-15,2007. Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed. Following documents were signed during the visit:

(i) Memorandum of Understanding on setting up a Joint Working Group on Gombating International Terrorism & Trans-National Crime

(ii) Memorandum of Understanding on Renewable Energy Cooperation

(iii) Cultural Exchange Programme 2007-09

(b) Mr. Francesco Rutelli, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Welfare and Cultural Activities visited India from January 27-31, 2007. Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed.

35 Japan

Mr. Taro Aso, Foreign Minister, visited India on 3 April as head of the Observer delegation to SAARC.

36. Jordan

H.M. King Abdullah-ll Bin AL Hussein and H.M.Queen Rania AI-Abdullah accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Talal Bin Mohammed, Minister of Industry and-Trade Salem KhazTaale, Minister of Information & Communication Technology Bassem Roussan and other senior officials including a business delegation visited India from November 30-December 2, 2006. During the visit, the King held discussions with President and Prime.Ministeron bilateral relations and the regional situation. Chairperson of UPASmt. Sonia Gandhi, External Affairs Minister, Shri Pranab Mukerjee and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Shri Lai Krishna Advani also called on the King. Following Agreements/Documents were signed:

(i) Cooperation in Agriculture

(ii) Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection

(iii) Cooperation in Tourism;

(iv) Culture Exchange Programme.

As a result of bilateral talks, M/s IFFCO signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Jordan Phosphate Mins Co. Ltd. (JPMC) on January 31, 2007 to set up a state of art phosphoric acid plant with a capacity of 1500 mt per day. IFFCO and its associates will hold 52% equity and JPMC and its associates withhold the remaining 48% in the joint venture.

37 Korea, Republic of

Mr. Song Min-soon, Foreign Minister visited India on 3 April as Head of the Observer delegation to SAARC

38. Kuwait

The Amir of the State of Kuwait HE. Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited India from 14-19 June 2006. It was agreed that the India-Kuwait Joint Commission for Economic and Commercial Cooperation would meet regularly and that the two countries would expand diversify cooperation in various sectors, particularly in the hydrocarbon sector. Agreements signed between India and Kuwait during the visit of the Amir of Kuwait included (a) Avoidance of Double Taxation Agreement and for the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income (DTAA) between India and Kuwait (b) Agreement on Drug Demand Reduction and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substanes and Precursor Chemicals and Related Matters and (c) Executive programme for the Cultural and Information Exchanges between India and Kuwait for the years 2006-2008.

39. Luxembourg

Mr. Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs & Immigration visited India from February 19-23 2007. Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed.

40. Malaysia

Dato' Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia visited India on February 15-16, 2007 in connection with the 4th India-

Malaysia Joint Commission Meeting held in New Delhi on February 16, 2007. During the visit, the Malaysian Foreign Minister called on the Prime Minister and had meeting with EAM. Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

41. Maldives

(a) H.E. Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of Maldives, accompained by his Foreign Minister, visited India from January 27-February 1, 2007 to lead the Maldivian delegation to participate in the Satyagraha Conference.

Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, Foreign Minister of Maldives, paid an official visit to India from October 23-28, 2006. He called on Prime Minister and also met Raksha Mantri. The discussions focused on bilateral relations and matters of mutual interest.

President Gayoom, accompanied by Foreign Minister Shaheed visited India from 2-5 April, 2007 in connection with the 14th SAARC Summit. Matters of bilateral, regional and international interest were discussed.

42. Malta

The Foreign Minister of Malta Dr. Michael Frendo'visited New Delhi from 22-23 March, 2007 to attend Commonwealth Connects-lnternational E-Partnership Summit held in New Delhi from 23-24 March, 2007. During his visit, he met MoS and the Minister of Commerce and Industry and had discussions on matters of mutual interest. The visit led to further improvement of our bilateral relations.

43. Mauritius

Mr. Madan Dulloo, Foreign Minister of Mauritius visited India to participate in the Pravasi Bharatiya (PBD) celebrations held in New Delhi from January 7-9, 2007. He chaired the Africa Session at the PBD.

H.E. Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of Mauritius, visited India from January 28-Februrary 1, 2007 to attend the Satyagraha Conference held in New Delhi.

44. Myanmar

General ThuraShwe Mann, Chief of Joint Staff of the Union of Myanmar, visited India. He met with Air Chief Marshal S.P. Tyagi, Chief of Air staff

Chief of Army Staff, Raksha Mantri, External Affairs Minister and had an audience with the President. During these meetings, bilateral relations and other issues of mutual interest were discussed.

45. Namibia

Dr. Marco Hausiku, Namibian Foreign Minister paid an official visit to India from October 26-30, 2006. During the visit, the Indian and Namibian sides discussed international, regional issues and bilateral cooperation in areas like education, agriculture, trade, mines and energy, technical training and defence including training for the Namibian diplomats on WTO issues. The visited Minister also met Shri Sis Ram Ola, Minister of Mines and discussed possible cooperation in mining, including survey and exploration of mineral resources in Namibia and training of its personnel.

46. Nepal

H.E. Mr. G.P. Koirala, Prime Minister, visited India from June 6-9, 2006. Discussions covered the entire gamut of our bilateral relationship with Nepal and issues of mutual interest.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Government of Nepal, Mr. K.P. SharmaOli paid an official visit to India from November 5-8, 2006. During the visit, Mr. Oli held talks with External Affairs Minister and alsq called on the Prime Minister besides holding other meetings. The visit provided an opportunity to review the entire gamut of bilateral relationship, and other issues of mutual interest.

Prime Minister G.P. Koirala and Foreign Minister Mrs. Sahana Pradhan visited India from April 1-6, 2007 to attend the SAARC Summit.

47. Netherlands

Dr. Bernard Bot,- Foreing Minister of Netherlands, visited India from November 5-6,2006. Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed.

48 Nigeria

Foreign Minister Mr. Oluyemi Adeniji visited New Delhi from 19-20 May, 2006. Issues of bilateral, regional and international interest were discussed.

49: Norway

(a) The Norwegian Crown Prince Haakon and Princess Mette-Marit

visited India on six days official visit from October 29-November 4,2006 He was accompanied by a high-level delegation including Ministers of Petroleum & Energy, Trade & Industry, and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and businessmen. The Crown Prince called on Rashtrapatiji and met the EAM. Bilateral relations including political and economic issues ware discussed.

(b) The Norwegian Foreign Minister Mr. Jonas Gahr Store paid an official visit to India from December 14-15, 2006 in connection with the Second Session of the Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) between India and Norway. Apart from bilateral meeting with EAM, the visiting Foreign Minister also had meetings with Minister of Science and Technology and Minister of Environment and Forests where bilateral relations including political and economic issues were discussed. During the JCM, the following were signed:

(i) An arrangement between the Government of India and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway on Gainful Occupation for Family Members of a Diplomatic Mission or Consular Posts;

(ii) A Terms of Reference (TOR) for establishing the Indo-Norwegian Joint Working Group on Environment.

50. Pakistan

The Pakistan Foreign Minister Mr. Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri visited India on February 20-22, 2007 as the head of the Pakistan delegation to attend the 5th India-Pak Joint Commission meeting held on February 21. EAM and FM of Pakistan reviewed progress of eight Technical Level Working Groups formed during the 4th Joint Commission meeting held in Islamabad in October, 2005. Eight Working Groups cover areas such as environment, Science and Technology, Tourism, Agriculture, Health, IT and Communication, Education and Information. An agreement on "Reducing the Risk from Accidents relating to Nuclear Weapons" was signed between the two countries on 21 st February, 2007 in the presence of EAM and FM of Pakistan.

Prime Minister of Pakistan Shaukat Aziz and Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri visited India in the first week of April 4, 2007 to attend SAARC Summit in New Delhi. Prime Minister met Pakistan Prime Minister on April 4, 2007 on the sidelines of SAARC Summit and discussed a wide range of bilateral issues including trade, energy, banking,

air connectivity and other issues. Pakistan Prime Minister assured Prime Minister of India that Pakistan would take early action to return fishing boats seized from Indian fishermen. The two sides also agreed to review the status of each other's citizens held prisoners in the two countries They agreed to increase air connectivity between India and Pakistan. They also agreed to continue the ongoing discussion on the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. Pakistan Prime Minister informed Prime Minister of India that Pakistan was ready to export cement to India taking advantage of the duty reduction announced by the Government of India. He also informed that Pakistan is issuing more visas to Sikh Yatris coming from across the world to visit Sikh Shrines in Pakistan. The Pakistan Prime Minister thanked the Prime Minister of India for the financial support given to the families of the victims of the Samjhauta train incident

51 Portugal

THE. Mr. Anibal Cavaco Silva, President of Portugal, accompanied by Minister of Culture, Minister for Economy and Innovation, MOS for Foreign Affairs, and MoS for Science and Technology and Higher education visited India from January 11-17,2007. Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed. Following agreements/documents were signed during the visit:

(i) Extradition Treaty;

(ii) Cultural Exchange Programme 2007-09;

(iii) Education Exchange Programme 2007-09.

52 Qatar

Mr. Abdulla Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy and Industry of the State of Qatar visited India during November 23-25,2006 alongwith a 12-member strong delegation. The visiting dignitary called on the Prime Minister, EAM and Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas with whom he held discussions on bilateral cooperation especially in the oil and gas sectors.

53. Romania

H.E. Mr. Traian Basescu, President of Romania, paid a State Visit to India from October 22-24, 2006. He was accompanied by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Economy and Commerce, and Telecommunications and IT During his visit, he had meetings with President, Prime Minister,

Vice-President and Chairperson of UPA, Smt. Sonia Gandhi. Bilateral relations including political and economic issues were discussed. The following bilateral agreements/understandings were signed:

(i) Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) between India and Romania for the year 2007-09.

(ii) Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation between India and Romania.

(iii) Agreement between Small Scale Industries of India and Romania, and

(iv) MOU between Foreign Service Institute of India and Romanian Diplomatic Institute.

54. Russia

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Alexander Zhukov visited India on 28th June, 2006 to meet Finance Minister for an inter-sessional review of the Indo-Russian Inter-Government Commission (IRIGC) on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation. He again visited India from 7-10 December, 2006 to co-chair along with the External Affairs Minister the12th Session of the IRIGC. The meetings reviewed progress on bilateral cooperation in the economic, scientific and cultural fields.

The Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr. Alexander Zhukov visited India from December 7-10, 2006. He co-chaired the12th Session of the Indo-Russian Inter-Government Commission (IRIGC) on trade, economic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation on 8th December in Delhi. The two sides discussed ways of enhancing bilateral trade and investment.economic cooperation in areas such as energy, metallurgy, commercialization of new and innovative technologies and links between the financial sectors. A Protocol on the deliberations of the IRIGC was signed at the end of the meeting.

The Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister, Mr.Sergei Ivanov visited India from 23-26 January, 2007. He co-chaired the Sixth Meeting of the India- Russia Inter- Government Commisssion for Military Technical Coorperation (IGC-MTC) and joined the delegation of President Putin to India. During the visit, agreements on licensed production of RD-33 aero engines in India, Protocol of Intent on joint design, development

and production of multi-role transport aircraft and Protocol on the Sixth Meeting of iGC-MTC were signed between the two sides.

(d) H.E. Mr. Vladimir V. Putin, President of'the Russian Federation, paid an official visit to India from January 25-26,2007 for the annual summit meeting. He was the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations. He was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Alexander Zhukov, Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Mr. Sergei Ivanov and Foreign Minister Mr. Sergei Lavrov apart from other senior functionaries. During the visit, President Putin met the President, Prime Minister and Chairperson of the UPA. Both sides discussed bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest and concern. During the visit, following documents were signed between the two Governments:-

(i) Joint Statement on the outcome of the official visit of the President of the Russian Federation to India;

(ii) Programme of Cultural Exchanges for the years 2007-09;

(iii) Protocol on holding "Year of Russia in India" in the year 2008 and "Year of India in Russia" in the year 2009;

(iv) Memorandum of Intent on development of cooperation in the construction of additional nuclear power plant units at the Kudankulam site as well as in the construction of Russian design nuclear power plants at new sites in the Republic of India;

(v) Agreement on access of the Indian Party to navigation signals of the Russian Global Navigation Satellite System GLONASS for peaceful purposes;

(vi) Agreement on access of the Indian Party to a part of the Russian Global Navigation Satellite System GLONASS Radio Frequency Spectrum;

(vii) Agreement on cooperation in the joint satellite project 'YOUTHSAT; and

(viii) Protocol on exchange of information between the two customs on the movement of goods and conveyances between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation,

(ix) A Joint Statement by President Putin and the Prime Minister on the peaceful uses of atomic energy was also issued

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Mr. Sergei Lavrow visited India on February 14, 2007 for the India-Russia-China Trilateral Foreign Ministers Meeting. The three countries discussed trilateral cooperation, current global situation and recent developments on regional and international issues of mutual concern. A Joint Communique was issued at the end of the meeting.

Russian Foreign Minister Mr. Sergei Lavrov visited India on 17th November, 2006. He met with the External Affairs Minister and called on the Prime Minister to discuss bilateral relations and regional and international issues of mutual interest. He accompanied President Putin from 25-26 January, 2007. The Russian Foreign Minister again visited New Delhi on 14th February, 2007 for the trilateral India-Russia-China Foreign Ministers' meeting to discuss the current global situation, regional and international issues and trilateral economic cooperation. A Joint Communique by the three Foreign Ministers was issued on 14th February, 2007

55 Singapore

Dr. Balaji Sadasivan, Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Singapore visited India from September 24-October 5, 2006. During his visit, he held discussions with Minister of Culture and Tourism and Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission. Dr. Sadasivan also visited Bihar. Tamil Nadu. Pondicherry and had meetings with the Chief Ministers of the three States. Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

The Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore, Prof. S. Jayakumar, visited India from January 6-8,2007. He was the Chief Guest at the Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas, 2007 celebrations. During his stay, Prof. Jayakumar called on Prime Minister, Minister of External Affairs and Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs. Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

(c)Mr. George Yeo, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Singapore visited India from January 16-23, 2007. During the visit, he called on Prime Minister, Minister of External Affairs, Minister of Human Resource Development, Minister of Finance, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

(d) Prof. S. Jayakumar, Dy. Prime Minister & Coordinating Minister for

National Security, Minister of Law of Singapore visited India from 13-17 March, 2007 He was Chief Guest at Parvasi Bhartiya Divas, 2007. He called on PM, EAM, Ministers of Defence, Finance, Home Affairs and National Security Advisor

56 Slovenia

H E Mr. Janez Drnovsek, President of Slovenia, visited India in connection with the Satyagraha Conference from 29-30 January, 2007 He had meetings with PM, UPAChairperson, and EAM, wherein he discussed matters of mutual interest.

57 South Africa

Mrs Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa paid a visit to India from September 10-13, 2006. During her visit, the South African Deputy President met President, Vice-President, and discussed issues, of mutual interest mainly relating to skills development, capacity building and training of South Africans in the areas of education, ICT, management, vocational training and local governance.

58 Spain

HE. Mr. Jose Luis Rodriguez ZAPATERO, Prime Minister, paid a State visit to India from 03-04 July, 2006. Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed during his visit A Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty on Criminal Matters, an MoU on Institutionalisation of Political Dialogue and an MoU between Technology Development Board and Centre for Development of Industrial Technology were signed

59 Sri Lanka

HE Mr Mahinda Rajapakse. President of Sri Lanka, visited India on November 25-29, 2006. Sri Lankan Prime Minister, H E. Mr. Wickremanayake visited India on January 28-30,2007. Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mr. Rohitha Bogollagama visited India on January 30-31, 2007.

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera visited India on 22 June, 2006. He again visited India from 6-9 August, 2006 to attend the BIMSTEC Ministerial meeting in New Delhi and accompanied President Rajapakse during his visit in November, 2006

During these meetings, bilateral relations and other issues of mutual interest were discussed.

60 Sweden

The Deputy PM and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden Ms. Maud Olofsson, visited India in connection with the Satyagraha Conference from 29-30 January, 2007. She had meetings with Chairperson, UPA, EAM and Urban Development Minister. She also visited Chennai to receive the Swedish East India ship "Gotheborg" which embarked on two-year voyage repeating epic journeys first made over250 years ago.

61. Tajikistan

The President of Tajikistan, HE. Mr. E. Rahmonov visited India on August 6-10, 2006 and met the President, Vice-President, Prime Minister and Minister of Mines. The two sides discussed wide ranging bilateral issues, including economic cooperation. During the visit, six documents were signed including a Joint Declaration.

62 Tanzania

Dr. Ms. Asha-RoseMigiro, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tanzania paid a working visit to India from 19th-26th November, 2006. During the visit of the Tanzanian Foreign Minister, discussions focused on the need to strengthen bilateral cooperation mechanisms, such as the early convening of the Bilateral Joint Commission and the Joint Trade Committee. It was agreed to enhance cooperation in agriculture. SMEs, ICT, education and training, mining, science and technology, etc.

63 Thailand

HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhom of Thailand is paying official visit to India from March 5-9, 2007. During the New Delhi part of the visit on March 6, 2007, the Princess called on the Vice-President and had a meetig with the Minister of External Affairs. Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

Mr. Kantathi Suphamongkhon, Foreign Minister of Thailand paid a bilateral visit to India from August 7-8. 2006. During the visit, he held discussions with Minister of State for External Affairs on bilateral issues, regional and international issues of mutual interest. Both the leaders resolved to work closely in the multilateral fora like the BIMSTEC to strengthen bilateral ties between India and Thailand .

64 UAE

Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai visited India from 25-26 March, 2007. Discussions covered issues of mutual interest *viz.* strengthening bilateral trade and investment relations, welfare of the Indian Community in UAE and regional issues. Agreements signed by India and UAE during the visit of Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum included (a) Protocol amending the Agreement for Avoidance of Double Taxation (DTAA), (b) Framework Agreement between the.Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the UAE for developing industrial relations, (c) MoU for Technical Cooperation between Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology (ESMA), (d) MoU for Technical Cooperation in Accreditation Activities between Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology (ESMA) and National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL), and (e) MoU for Assistance and Mutual Cooperation between Emirates Securities and Commodities Authority (ESCA) and Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

65. Uganda

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda, Mr. Sam Kutesa paid an official visit to India from October 29-November 2, 2006. During the visit, the two sides discussed bilateral cooperation in areas like human resource development, energy, Pan-African e-network, technical training and transport Mr. Kutesa sought GOI assistance for a hydro-power project of 200-300 MW for which Government of Uganda has signed an MoU with BHEL. He also sought assistance for training of young Ugandans in the fields of IT and enterpreneurship. The visiting Minister invited Prime Minister and EAM to visit Uganda for the next CHOGM Summit to be held in Kampala in November, 2007

66. UK

Ms. Margret Beckett, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of UK visited India from November 1-9, 2006. Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed.

Duke of York visited India from October 20-November 4, 2006. He met representatives of FICCI and Cll and discussed matters of economic cooperation.

67. Vietnam

Mr. Pham Gia Kheim, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Vietnam visited India from February 25 to March 1, 2007 in connection with the 13th India-Vietnam Joint Commission Meeting held in New Delhi on February 27, 2007. During the visit, he called on Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs. Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed

Statement-ll

Details in respect of Indian dignitaries visiting abroad

1. France

Hon'ble President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam addressed the European Parliament in Strasbourg on April 25, 2007. This was the first address by an Indian President to the European Parliament.

2. Greece

Hon'ble President paid a State visit to Greece from 25-28 April, 2007. He met his counterpart Dr. Karolos Papoulias. He also met with the Prime Minister of Greece, the President of Parliament and other distinguished personalities including the Leader of the Opposition Mr. George Andreas Papandreou, who is also currently the President of the Socialist International.

During this visit, the following agreements were signed:

(i) Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPA); and

(ii) Science and Technology.

3. Guyana/Trinidad and Tobago

The Vice-President visited Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago from November 6-9, 2006. In Guyana, three MOUs/agreements were signed during the visit, namely:

(i) Renewal of Cultural Exchange Programme

(ii) Arrangement for employment of dependents of diplomats/officials

(iii) Line of Credit of US $ 2.1 million for traffic signalling system in Georgetown.

4. Brazil

Prime Minister visited to Brazil from September 10-14, 2006 for India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Summit. Following documents were signed on that occasion:

(i) Trilateal Agreement concerning Merchant Shipping and other Maritime Transport Related Matters.

(ii) Framework for Cooperation on the Information Society.

(iii) Action Plan on Trade Facilitation for Standards, Technical Regulations and Conformity Assessment.

(iv) Memorandum of Understanding on Establishing a Trilateral Task Team on Biofuels.

(v) Memorandum of Understanding on Trilateral Cooperation in Agriculture and Allied Fields.

During his bilateral part of the visit, PM had talks with President Lula on strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation. Following documents were signed during the bilateral part of Prime Minister's visit to Brazil (September 10-14,2006)

(i) Bilateral Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation.

(ii) Air Services Agreement.

(iii) Memorandum of Understanding between Bureau of Indian Standards & ABNT.

(iv) Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the field of Human Settlements.

(v) Memorandum of Understanding on Plant Health Protection.

(vi) Memorandum of Understanding on Conduct of Weeks of Indian Culture in Brazil & Weeks of Brazilian Culture in India.

(vii) Memorandum of Understanding between Bharat Earth Movers Limited and CCCE, a Brazlian company, for manufacture of railway wagons.

(viii) Memorandum of Understanding between ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) and Petrobras of Brazil.

(ix) Work Plan for Cooperation in Agricultural Research.

5. Cuba

Prime Minister visited Cuba from September 14-18, 2006 to participate in the 14th NAM Summit. Following documents were signed at the Summit:

(i) Final Document.

(ii) Declaration on the Purposes and Principles and the role of the Non-Aligned Movement in the Present Interanational Juncture.

(iii) Document on the Methodology of the Non Aligned Movement.

(iv) Plan of Action for Non Aligned Movement.

(v) Statement on the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Issue.

(vi) Declaration on Palestine-

6. South Africa

Prime Minister visited South Africa from September 30-October 3,2006. PM and President Mbeki decided to intensify bilateral cooperation and raise the existing strategic partnership to even higher levels. They also reaffirmed their determination to explore opportunities for cooperation in various sectors, particularly in energy, tourism, health, automobiles, auto components, chemicals, dyes, textiles, fertilizers, information technology small and medium enterprises and infrastructure. Following documents were signed during that visit:

Agreement on Co-operation in the Field of Education.

Memorandum of Understanding between Spoornet and Ministry of Railways of India.

7. Japan

PrimeMinister visited Japan from 13-16 December, 2006 at the invitation of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The two leaders decided to establish a Strategic and Global Partnership between India and Japan. This will impart stronger political, economic and strategic dimensions to bilateral relations, serve long-term interests of both countries, enhance all-round cooperation and contribute to greater regional peace and stability. The two leaders announced an "India-Japan Special Economic Partnership Initiative" (SEPI). This initiative will promote enhancement of investment from Japan to India and help develop India's infrastructure and manufacturing capacity.

Following documents were signed on that occasion:

Joint Statement: Towards India Japan Strategic and Global Partnership.

Memorandum of Cooperation between Japan Coast Guard and Indian Coast Guard.

Memorandum of Understanding on Scientific Cooperation Programme between Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, and the Japan Science and Technology Agency.

Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Science and Technology between Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India and RIKEN, Japan.

Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian Cultural for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the Japan Foundations.

(f) Memorandum of Understanding between Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Government of Japan for establishment of the "Delhi-Mum bai Industrial Corridor".

(g) Memorandum of Understanding between Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Government of Japan and Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India for the establishment of the Japan-India Policy Dialogue at the Ministerial level.

(h) Joint Statement on the promotion of India-Japan tourism exchanges.

(i) Joint Ministerial Statement on the launching of a Joint Task Force (JTF) to develop an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)/ Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and Japan.

(j) Cooperation Agreement between the Government of India and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).

(k) Memorandum of Understanding on the development of Indian Institute of Information Technology for Design and Manufacturing (IITDM) with Japanese assistance at Jabalpur.

8. Philippines

Prime Minister visited Cebu (Philippines) from 13-15 January, 2007 to attend 5th ASEAN-lndia and 2nd East Asia Summits where he also had bilateral meetings with President of Philippines, PM of China, Vietnam

and Malaysia on the sidelines of the Summits. Following documents were sighed:

(a) Cebu Declaration on East Asian Energy Security.

9. Finland

PM paid an official visit to Finland from October 12-14,2006 PM's bilateral visit coincided with the 7th India-EU Summit held in Helsinki. PM held bilateal talks with his counterpart apart from delegation-level talks. The PM's visit highlighted the increasing engagement and substantive economic and political content of the bilateral relationship. On the recommendation of the High Level Trade Group, it was decided to commerce negotiations for the conclusion of a Trade & Investment Agreement between India and the EU. An India-EU Business Summit was also held which provided an opportunity to reinforce the message of India as a secure and profitable trade and investment destination.

10. Russia

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh visited St. Petersburg from 16-18 July, 2006 to attend a meeting of leaders of G-8 and outreach countries. During the visit, PM held discussion with G-8 and outreach countries' leaders. He had bilateral meeting with President Putin of Russia and a trilaterai Summit meeting with President Hu Jinato of China and President Putin of Russia on 17th July, 2007. The meeting with G-8 and outreach countries discussed international development issues and emerging challenges for the world community. The meeting with the Russian President reviewed bilateral relations in various areas. The trilateral'meeting discussed the global situation and trilateral economic cooperation among India, Russia and China.

11. UK

Prime Minister visited UK from October 9-11, 2006, Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed during the visit.

12. Afghanistan

Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Minister of External Affairs visited Kabul from January 23-24,2007 to invite President Karzai to the 14th SAARC Summit. He called on President Hamid Karzai, Speaker of the Wolesi Jirga Mohammad Yunus Qanooni, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee

on Foreign Relations of the Wolesi Jirga Ustad Rasool Sayyaf and Foreign Minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta. As part of India's long-term commitment to the stability, progress and peace in Afghanistan, India announced an additional pledge of US $100 million taking total assistance to US $750 million. An MoU on Capacity Development Facility of Afghanistan was also signed with UNDP and Afghan Government. EAM also handed over the Polyclinic Block of Indira Gandhi Institute for Child Health (IGICH), built with Indian assistance. Also, the road adjacent to Indira Gandhi Institute for Child Health Care (IGICH) was named as "Indira Gandhi Road" with the unveiling of a plaque by the EAM.

13. Bangladesh

EAM visited Dhaka on 19 Februrary, 2007 to extend an invitation to Bangladesh to participate in the SAARC Summit. Discussions with the Bangladeshi side covered both bilateral as well as SAARC issues. In the context of bilateral relations, both sides agreed to take steps to place bilateral relations on an "irreversible higher trajectory".

14. Iran

EAM visited Tehran from 6-7 February, 2007. Discussions were held on bilateral and regional issues. India emphasised the importance it attached to relations with Iran. The importance of Iran to India as a transit point to access Afghanistan and Central Asia was mentioned On Iran's nuclear issue, India emphasised that all possible efforts should be made to address the issue by peaceful means through dialogue and negotiations with all sides showing flexibility and restraint. Discussions were also held on the Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline Project. India referred to the last trilateral meeting of Secretaries held in Tehran in January, 2007 where it had reaffirmed its commitment to the project and welcomed the agreement on the price of gas between Iran and Pakistan. On the regional issues the situation in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine were discussed.

15. Japan

EAM visited Japan on 22-23 March, 2007 EAM and the Foreign Minister of Japan initiated the first Ministerial-level Strategic Dialogue between the two countries. They exchanged views on ways to enhance cooperation on regional, multilateral and global issues, and reiterated their readiness to

cooperate in the process of community building in the Asian region. Both sides also discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations through the implementation of understandings and agreements contained in the Joint Statement signed by the two Prime Ministers in December, 2006. During the visit, the two sides agreed on the modalities for the High Level Energy Dialogue and the Bilateral Constitution Mechanism on High Technology Trade. Government is regularly monitoring progress on the implementation of understandings reached with Japan in the fields of defence and security, economic cooperation, science & technology & people-to-people exchanges.

16. Maldives

EAM visited Maldives on 10 January 2007 to extend an invitation to President Gayoom for the SAARC Summit, which was held in Delhi in April 2007. Matters of bilateral, regional and international interest were discussed.

17. Myanmar

EAM paid an official visit to Myanmar from 19-21 January 2007. During this visit he met Vice Senior General Maung Aye, Vice Chairman, SPDC, Minister for National Planning and Economic Division of Union of Myanmar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Union of Myanmar and Minister for Religious Affairs of Union of Myanmar. Bilateral relations including the activities of Indian insurgent groups on the Indo-Myanmar border, border management, implementation of various infrastructure projects, measures to enhance trade and cooperation in the field of energy were discussed during the meeting.

18. Nepal

EAM visited Nepal on December 17, 2006 and extended PM's invitation for the SAARC Summit. The discussions covered the entire gamut of our bilateral relations with Nepal and issues of mutual interest.

19. Pakistan

EAM visited Pakistan on January 13-14,2007 to convey Prime Minister's invitation to Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz to attend 14th SAARC Summit held in New Delhi in April 2007. EAM met Pak President

Pervez Musharraf, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri.

EAM and Pak FM, *inter alia,* agreed on the following:

(i) to establish a committee on prisoners comprising retired judges of the superior judiciary to visit jails in the two countries and propose steps to ensure humane treatment and expedite release of prisoners who have completed their prison terms; (ii) on Siachen, it was decided that the officials will meet at an early date to address the issue; (iii) to facilitate movement of diplomats Noida and Gurgaon in India and Taxila and Hasan Abdal in Pakistan. Procedures for this will be worked out; (vi) the first meeting of the Joint Anti-terrorism Mechanism would take place before end of March 2007; (vii) regarding Sir Creek, the officials concerned were directed to expedite their work. The joint survey of Sir Creek would begin on 15th January 2007; and (viii) to launch the Fourth Round of Composite Dialogue on 13-14 March 2007.

20. Philippines

EAM visited Cebu (Philippines) from 11-12 January 2007 to attend the Ministerial meetings held before ASEAN-lndia & East Asia Summits. He also had bilateral meetings with his counterparts from New Zealand, Indonesia and Thailand. Participation of India at the highest level in these two summits and related ministerial meetings was an exercise to strengthen our relations with the ASEAN block as part of our 'Look East' Policy

Reinstatement of retrenched employees

4630. SHRI ALI ANWAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to refer to reply to unstarred Question 1058 given in the Rajya Sabha on 8.3.2007 and state:

the reasons for not reinstating the retrenched employees under Telecom District Himatnagar Gujarat as regular employees despite directions of Hon'ble High Court of Gujarat;

the reasons for these employees being deprived of the benefits of regular employees such as gratuity, Pension, GPF, leave etc. as given to other employees as per their entitlement; and